

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 14675

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: WEST GERMAN BUNDESTAG ELECTION: ONE MONTH
TO GO

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE WEST GERMAN BUNDESTAG ELECTION IS
ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE THAN A MONTH AWAY AND PUBLIC OPINION
POLLS INDICATE IT IS STILL TOO CLOSE TO CALL. AMONG
THOSE WHO HAVE DECIDED, THE OPPOSITION AND THE GOVERNMENT
BOTH HOVER AROUND THE FIFTY PERCENT FIGURE AND
TEN TO FOURTEEN PERCENT REMAIN UNDECIDED. THE MAJOR
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CANDIDATES HAVE NOW THROWN THEMSELVES FULLY INTO THE

CAMPAIGN. CDU INSIDERS CLAIM THEY HAVE NOT SEEN THEIR WORKERS SO MOBILIZED SINCE ADENAUER'S TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, SPD POLITICIANS REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THE COALITION, ON THE STRENGTH OF THE CHANCELLOR BONUS, WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN A SMALL MAJORITY. CONTROVERSIAL SLOGANS ASIDE, NO MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUES HAVE EMERGED AND PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM HAS NOT YET BEEN IGNITED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE GERMAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS NOW ENTERED THE SO-CALLED "HOT PHASE." ALL THE MAJOR CANDIDATES HAVE RETURNED FROM VACATION AND HAVE THROWN THEMSELVES INTO GRUELING ELECTION CAMPAIGN SCHEDULES. BY TRAIN, HELICOPTER AND AUTOMOBILE THE CANDIDATES ARE CRISSCROSSING THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, ATTEMPTING TO MOBILIZE THE VOTERS.

2. THERE IS AN ABUNDANCE OF CAMPAIGN POSTERS AROUND AND TELEVISION IS FILLED WITH POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS AS WELL AS POLITICAL PROGRAMS. THE UNDECIDED VOTE STILL SHOWS UP AT TEN TO FOURTEEN PERCENT AND DESPITE ALL THE FRANTIC ACTIVITY, PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM HAS YET TO BE IGNITED.

3. THE POLLS ARE LITTLE HELP IN INDICATING HOW THE ELECTION WILL COME OUT, EXCEPT TO SHOW THAT IT WILL BE A CLOSE RACE. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION IS SO SMALL (TWO PERCENT) THAT IT COULD BE REVERSED BY THE MARGIN FOR ERROR. IN ADDITION, NO ONE IS CERTAIN HOW THE UNDECIDED VOTERS WILL DECIDE ON OCTOBER 3.

4. BOTH THE CDU AND THE SPD STRESS PATRIOTIC MOTIVES. THEIR ELECTION SLOGANS CLAIM THAT THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IS HEADED FOR DISASTER SHOULD THE WRONG PARTY BE ELECTED -
- THE COUNTRY WILL BECOME A SOCIALIST STATE IF THE

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COALITION REMAINS IN POWER, OR SOCIAL PEACE WILL BE UNDERMINED IF THE OPPOSITION WINS. CAMPAIGN RHETORIC ASIDE, NO MAJOR ISSUES HAVE EMERGED AND THE FINAL OUTCOME WILL PROBABLY BE DECIDED BY THE RELATIVE POPULARITY OF THE TWO MAJOR CANDIDATES, SCHMIDT AND KOHL.

5. CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE KOHL HAS NOW NAMED THE CDU/CSU ELECTION TEAM BUT THE LATEST ADDITIONS HAVE NOT BEEN DESIGNATED FOR SPECIFIC JOBS IN A FUTURE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. CDU INSIDERS TELL US THAT THE PARTY RANK AND FILE ARE MOBILIZED TO A DEGREE THAT HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE THE DAYS OF ADENAUER. THEY ALSO CLAIM THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS FACE LESS HOSTILITY, EVEN IN SPD STRONGHOLDS, THAN IN 1972. CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE KOHL HAS TOLD US THAT HE HAS BEEN SURPRISED BY THE LACK OF HECKLING AT ELECTION RALLIES. THE JUSOS, HE SAID, HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO KEEP QUIET AND THE LEFTISTS SUCH AS THE DKP ARE DISSPIRITED. UNLIKE IN 1972, HE REMARKED, CDU SUPPORTERS DO NOT HAVE THEIR BUMPER STICKERS TORN OFF AND ARE NOT BEING OSTRACIZED.

6. KOHL COMES ACROSS AS A DEPENDABLE, DECENT MAN WHO PRIDES HIMSELF ON BEING A GENERALIST RATHER THAN AN EXPERT. NEVERTHELESS, HE REMAINS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO THE CHARGE THAT HE IS PROVINCIAL AND LACKS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, BRINGING UP THE SUBJECT EVEN WHEN OTHERS DO NOT. KOHL AND HIS STAFF CLAIM THAT STRAUSS' DESIGNATION AS FUTURE FINANCE MINISTER IN A CDU/CSU GOVERNMENT NOT ONLY DISARMS SOME OF THE ANTI-STAUSS ANTIPATHY AMONG THE VOTERS, PARTICULARLY IN NORTHERN GERMANY, BUT THAT EVEN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ADMIT PRIVATELY THAT THE CSU CHAIRMAN HAS CONSIDERABLE TALENT AS A FINANCIAL EXPERT.

7. THE SPD HAS INTRODUCED THE LOCKHEED AFFAIR INTO THE CAMPAIGN IN AN EFFORT TO DISCREDIT STRAUSS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT A JUSTICE MINISTRY OFFICIAL WILL TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES TO SETTLE REMAINING QUESTIONS SO THAT THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT CAN OBTAIN THE SEC DOCUMENTS ON LOCKHEED. THE TIMING OF THE TRIP WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT IT IS A POLITICAL PLOY. AT THIS LATE DATE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT AGREEMENT WILL BE WORKED OUT FOR THE INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE BEFORE ELECTION DAY ON OCTOBER 3.

8. IN THE LAST TWO ISSUES "SPIEGEL" HAS PUBLISHED COVER STORIES AND INTERVIEWS WITH BOTH KOHL AND SCHMIDT. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE NEWS MAGAZINE, CONSIDERED TO BE FRIENDLY TO THE GOVERNMENT, WAS SOMEWHAT TOUGHER ON KOHL THAN ON SCHMIDT. BOTH ARTICLES, HOWEVER, WERE EXTREMELY NASTY IN TONE AND CONTENT -- IMPLYING THAT KOHL WAS INCOMPETENT AND DUMB AND THAT SCHMIDT WAS A CONFIDENTIAL

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KNOW-IT-ALL, INCAPABLE OF TAKING ADVICE FROM ANYONE.

9. THE SPD NATIONAL CAMPAIGN IS BEING COORDINATED THROUGH THE MECHANICS OF WEEKLY MEETINGS BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND BRANDT AND THE WEEKLY SPD PRESIDUM MEETING. ALLEGEDLY, HERBERT WEHNER IS PLAYING ONLY A MINOR ROLE IN STRATEGICAL AND TACTICAL DECISIONS BUT IS ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING.

10. SOME WEEKS AGO, CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE KOHL CHALLENGED CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT TO A TV DEBATE. SCHMIDT REFUSED UNLESS FDP CHAIRMAN GENSCHER AND CSU CHAIRMAN STRAUSS WERE INCLUDED. SCHMIDT'S AIDES TELL US THAT HE REFUSED A ONE TO ONE DEBATE PRIMARILY BECAUSE GENSCHER OBJECTED THAT DEBATES BETWEEN KOHL AND SCHMIDT MIGHT POLARIZE OPINION SO MUCH THAT THE FDP WOULD BE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD. SCHMIDT AGREED BUT HE AND HIS ADVISORS ARE

STUNG BY THE CRITICISM THAT HE IS AFRAID OR UNWILLING TO
DEBATE KOHL.

11. NOW THE CHANCELLOR IS RECONSIDERING WHETHER HE
SHOULD DEBATE KOHL ON A ONE TO ONE BASIS. IF THIS
HAPPENS, THE SPD WILL TRY TO INSURE THAT THE FORMAT OF
THE DEBATES FOLLOWS THE AMERICAN MODEL -- MORE THAN ONE
DEBATE AND EACH DEBATE HAVING A SPECIFIC THEME. THE
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS BELIEVE THAT SUCH A FORMAT WOULD
PREVENT KOHL FROM HIDING BEHIND GENERALITIES AND WOULD
SHOW UP HIS LACK OF DETAILED KNOWLEDGE ON ISSUES.
KOHL SUPPORTERS ARE CONVINCED THAT A KOHL-SCHMIDT DEBATE
WOULD BE WORTH THE RISK BECAUSE SCHMIDT IS BOUND TO COME
ACROSS AS AGGRESSIVE AND ILL-MANNERED WHICH WILL CANCEL

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OUT THE LACK OF EXPERTISE ON KOHL'S PART. THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS ARE STILL FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF GETTING
GENSCHER TO AGREE WITH THE IDEA OF A KOHL-SCHMIDT
DEBATE.

12. THE FDP STILL LAGS BEHIND IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS.
MOST RECENT POLLS, WE ARE TOLD, INDICATE THAT THE
LIBERALS WILL RECEIVE BETWEEN SEVEN AND EIGHT PERCENT.
THE FOUR FDP CABINET MINISTERS AND FDP FRAKTION CHAIRMAN
MISCHNICK ARE NOW ENGAGED IN AN INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO
OVERCOME THEIR WEAK START AND TO BOOST THE VOTE. SO
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FAR THEY HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. AT THE KICK-OFF
RALLY IN HANNOVER GENSCHER PLUS THE OTHER MINISTERS ONLY
DREW A LACKLUSTER CROWD.

13. SO FAR THE CAMPAIGN HAS PRODUCED CONSIDERABLY MORE
HEAT THAN LIGHT. MOST GERMAN VOTERS ARE SOPHISTICATED
ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GOVERNMENT
REMAINING IN POWER OR THE OPPOSITION TAKING POWER WILL
NOT BE AS TERRIBLE AS POLITICIANS CLAIM. AS OF NOW, THE
RACE REMAINS NECK AND NECK, WITH NO ONE SURE WHO WILL
EMERGE THE WINNER ON OCTOBER 3.
HILLENBRAND

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